
S E R M O N

Preached in the CHAPELS of

ROMFORD and POPLAR, &c.

[Price Four-pence.]

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5
God's Threatnings against sinful Nations exemplified,
and improved.

A
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Preached in the CHAPELS of
ROMFORD and *POPLAR*,

And in the PARISH CHURCH of
ST. ANN, MIDDLESEX,

April 1, and 8, 1750.

Published at the Request of the several Congregations.

By *GLOCESTER RIDLEY, LL.B.*

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. CLARKE under the *Royal Exchange* Cornhill.
M. DCC. L.

God's Blessings upon the Nation and the King

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JER. xviii. 6, 7, 8.

— *Saith the Lord, Behold, as the Clay is in the Potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O House of Israel.*

At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it.

If that Nation against which I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.

THIS Word of God was addressed immediately to the *Jews*, whose King and Governor he was in an extraordinary Manner; Yet as he is also *the King of all the Earth*, the Doctrine of it is to be extended to all the Nations under Heaven. Though the *House of Israel* be the particular Object, yet every Nation and every Kingdom is the Subject. The Doctrine is not raised on any peculiar Relation which he bore to that People, but on the general absolute Acts of Creation and Providence: *Behold, as the Clay is in the Potter's hand, so are ye in mine Hands, O House of Israel.* As this Reason extends equally to every Kingdom, as well as to the *House of Israel*, the Doctrine raised upon it is equally important and necessary for every Kingdom to consider. That we may profitably apply it ourselves, let us reflect on the following Particulars:

I. The Foundation of this Doctrine, God's absolute Authority over us. *Behold, as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, so are ye in mine Hand, O House of Israel.*

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II. That

II. That this Authority, absolute as it is, is not exercised by an arbitrary Caprice, but with respect to our Behaviour. If we commit *the Evil of Sin*, he threatens and pronounces against us *the Evil of Punishment*.

III. What Use we ought to make of his Threatnings, the Execution of which is respited for a time in Mercy, and may be happily averted by our Reformation. *If that Nation, against which I have pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.*

FIRST, let us reflect on God's Authority over us, which he represents as absolute as the Potter's over the Clay. And indeed *He made us, not we ourselves*. To the Counsel of his own Will alone we owe, that we were designed *Vessels of Honour*; whereas, with the same Ease and Convenience to himself, he might have made us *Vessels of Dishonour*: Left us, as he found us, *nothing*; drew us into mere Existence, *formless, senseless Matter*; or fashioned us into *vegetable Life*; or animated us into *Reptiles and Beasts*. Of his good Pleasure only we are and were created. His Hands have fashioned us, his Care and Providence wrought us to this high and honourable Perfection, to be the chief of his Works below, formed after his own Image and Similitude.

If this reasoning Clay, from a short sighted Philosophy, attends to the Wheel alone, and refers his Grace and Beauty to that, without looking farther to him who gave it Motion, the designing Mind which intended its Uses, the skilful Hand which fashioned it; if the Clay say to him that fashioned it, *he hath no Hands*; if being calculated to serve for clean Uses, it disappoint the End and serve to the contrary—the Power that made it can immediately dissolve it; if he withdraw his Breath we die, and

are turned again to our Dust. He can either continue *Psal.*
 us in Existence for our Punishment, and *bruise us*
with a Rod of Iron, or in an Instant destroy us, and
break us in Pieces like a Potter's Vessel. And what
 is thus true of individual Persons, is equally so with
 whole Cities and Kingdoms; for they are counted *Is. xl. 12.*
but as the small Dust of the Balance before him. At *Jer. x. 10.*
his Wrath the Earth shall tremble, and the Nations
shall not be able to abide his Indignation. Yet,

SECONDLY, this Authority, absolute as it is, is
 not exercised by an arbitrary Caprice, but with res-
 pect to our Behaviour: If we commit the Evil of
 Sin, he threatens and pronounces against us the
 Evil of Punishment. It is against *Evil Nations*
and Kingdoms that he speaks *to pluck up, to pull*
down, and to destroy them. And here it concerns us
 to know, 1. What those Sins are which provoke
 God to pronounce Threatnings against a wicked
 People. 2. To hold up the Mirror to ourselves.
 And 3. To exemplify his Dealings with such Peo-
 ple from the History of past Ages.

1. What are those Sins which provoke God to
 pronounce Threatnings against a wicked People.
A forsaking God, and leaning to other Dependences
 appears foremost in this fatal Catalogue. This is
 the Provocation particularly mentioned in the Chap-
 ter from whence the Text is taken. Thus saith
 the Lord, *Behold, I frame Evil against you, and de-*
vise a Device against you. Because my People hath *Jer. xviii.*
forsaken me, they have burnt Incense to Vanity, they *11, 12.*
stumble from the ancient Paths, and say, we will walk
after our own Devices, and we will every one do the
Imagination of his evil Heart. And the same
 Prophet opens his divine Commission with de-
 nouncing Judgments for this Crime. *My People* *Jer. ii. 13.*
have *19.*

have committed two Evils; they have forsaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and bewed them out Cisterns, broken Cisterns that can hold no Water. — Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Backslidings shall reprove thee: Know therefore, and see, that it is an evil Thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my Fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

A second Evil is Pride and Self-confidence: For this Woe was denounced against Babylon; Thou If. xlvii. 7, 8, 10, saidst, I shall be a Lady for ever: Therefore bear now this thou that art given to Pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayst in thine Heart, I am, and none else besides me. — Thou hast trusted in thy Wickedness; thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy Wisdom and thy Knowledge is bath perverted thee, and thou hast said in thine Heart, I am, and none else besides me. Therefore shall Evil come upon thee, thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: And Mischief shall fall upon thee, thou shalt not be able to put it off: And Desolations shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

A third Evil is a total Devotion to Gain and Self-Interest, not bearing the Interruptions of Religion, nor regarding the Ruin of our Fellow-creatures. Hear this, O ye that swallow up the Needy, Amos viii. 4, 5, 7, 8. even to make the poor of the Land to fail. Saying, when will the New Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn, and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat, making the Ephab small, and the Sheckle great, and falsifying the Balances by Deceit? The Lord hath sworn by the Excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their Works. Shall not the Land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein.

Another Evil, but whose Name is Legion, and which follows in Consequence of the foregoing, is a general

a general Corruption of Manners. For this Israel is threatened by the Mouth of the Prophet Hosea. *The Lord hath a Controversy with the Inhabitants of the Land, because there is no Truth, nor Mercy, nor Knowledge of God in the Land. By Swearing, and Lying, and killing, and Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood. As they were increased, so they sinned against me. Whoredom and Wine, and new Wine take away the Heart. Therefore shall the Land mourn, I will punish them for their Ways, and reward them for their Doings, I will change their Glory into Shame.* Amos iv. 1, 2, 3. 7-9. 11.

When a Nation or Kingdom is generally guilty of any of these Evils, God is angry with that People, and threatens to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy them. What Degree then of the Divine Wrath must that Nation provoke which is publicly, daringly, professedly guilty of all these Impieties united?

2. Shall I imitate the courtly Prophets of Judah, shall I speak smooth Things, and prophesy Deceit? or shall I, with Isaiah, shew the People their Transgression, and the House of Jacob their Sins? As to give deceitful Kisses is the Office of an Enemy, while the Wounds of a Friend are faithful, I will apply myself to this ungrateful Task, open that Scene of Wickedness in which we have all a Part, Sinners as we are! and take a View of those dreadful Threatnings, of which we ourselves are the unhappy Objects. This Mirror should be often held up; for we are apt, after having beheld our moral, as well as our natural, Face in a Glass, to go our way, and straightway forget what manner of Men we were. Ja. i. 24.

—With regard to Irreligion and Idolatry. Have we not forsaken the God of our Fathers, a Trinity in Unity, and as it were publicly voted down two of

Heb. x.
29.

of those Names into which we were all baptized? The Redemption of Sinners by the Sacrifice of Christ, those peculiar glad Tidings which constitute the Gospel; the Graces, Assistances, and Operations of the Holy Ghost, that Promise of the Gospel, and Seal of our Redemption, all openly denied, scoffed at, and ridiculed? That *Blood of the Covenant is counted an unholy Thing*, and *Despise is done unto the Spirit of Grace*. So exploded is this Faith and Doctrine that scarce will any ordinary Conversation bear the mention of them; nay the publick Offices of Religion grow tasteless, and are deserted because they continue, to be taught there. O height of Guilt and Madness! for Sinners to mock at Redemption, and refuse the Earnest of Salvation!

Have we not *stumbled from the ancient Paths*, and *walked each after his own Devices*? If we consider what Numbers absent themselves from our religious Worship, sacrificing to Mammon, Ambition, Pleasure, and *burning Incense to their own Vanities*; what Numbers tear themselves from our Communion, the Dupes of every one who has Impudence enough to pretend to be inspired, or Ignorance enough to believe himself to be so; who abuse the Indulgence of their spiritual Governors into Schism, and the Gospel Liberty into Licentiousness; we shall find that our Idolatry is greater than that of which the Prophet complains, *according to the Number of thy Cities are thy Gods, O Judah*. Alas! we have scarce a Parish left that is in Communion with itself. A new Faith, or new Mode of Worship, according to the Imagination of distempered Brains, disturb the thin Remains of Piety left among us.

—With regard to Pride and Self-confidence, have not we, like the *Chaldeans*, *trusted in our Wickedness*,

ness, saying, none seek us? Have not our Wisdom and our Knowledge perverted us? We pretend to conduct ourselves by wiser Rules than our Creator has prescribed, and our Fathers taught us. Our Devotions are paid more at the Lever's of the Great, and to those Persons from whom we have temporal Expectancies, than in the Temple of God. Our Confidence is placed in the Children of Men, rather than in him at whose Pleasure alone they breath. Too many of us erect our Dependencies on the Ruins of Truth, Honour, and Virtue. The Rich Man bids his Soul take its Ease, eat, drink, and be merry: And the wise Man thinks Honesty was but a political Invention to keep Fools undermost. A little Acquaintance with the World cannot fail to give a serious Mind very uneasy Reflections on the Conduct of it. Yet as these Reflections might lead me where you are not concerned, to pursue them farther might appear rather Satire than Reproof, and would divert our Censure from our own Actions, where I would chuse to point it, to the Actions of others where it would be as needless as improper.

—With respect to an *Attachment to private Gain and Profit*; (a Species of the former Vice, as it springs from a Trust and Confidence in Wealth, the Idolatry of Mammon) this is so prevailing a Vice that we appear to be intirely a Nation of Gamesters and Merchants. We are worse than the People of *Israel*; they indeed were impatient to be interrupted by religious Days and Seasons, saying, *When will the new Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn, and the Sabbath that we may set forth Wheat?* But no Decency restrains this People; their Impatience for Gain breaks through all Interruptions either of God's Law, or the Laws of their Country. The Card-Tables in higher Life;
the

the open Pursuit of their Employments in many, and the private Retirement into their Compting-Houses to balance their Books in others, are notorious Testimonies of a National Profanation of the Sabbath, to the villanous Purposes of private Gain. What despicable Opinion must our Neighbours conceive of this once religious, wise, and formidable Country, to hear, that useful and entertaining Conversation is banished from politer Company, and that the Wisdom of the upper Class is employed in calculating the Chances on a couple of Dice, and two and fifty Cards. And that in the World of Business, illicit Trade, false Weights and Measures, Fraud, Deceit, Oppression, Impositions, must be fenced against by innumerable Oaths, which yet are so far from preventing, that they only add to the Load of their Guilt the Weight of innumerable Perjuries. In short, that among High and Low, Rich and Poor, *Profit and Loss* engages the whole Attention of the thinking People.

— And must we wade still farther in Iniquities, and discover still more the Nakedness and Dishonour of our Country? The Flood of *Immoralities*, which overwhelmed *Israel*, pours like a Torrent in upon Us. That Intemperance, Debauchery, and Uncleanness, so generally practised, so industriously cultivated and taught, so openly defended, so shamelessly gloried in, are as needless to be expatiated upon, as it is impossible to conceal or be blind to. The Reins of Discipline thrown up to Youth, Traps and Baits every where laid to corrupt them, Order and Decency banished from private Families, the giddy Whirl of Pleasure, that rolls through the four and twenty Hours, must shock the Apprehension of every one who believes a Providence, an observant Governor of the World; or who has seen in the History of past Ages the

Ruin

Ruin of Nations less guilty than our own. This leads me

3. To exemplify God's Dealings with sinful Kingdoms from the History of past Ages.

Reason would lead us to apprehend that different Causes would produce different Effects; that the Conduct of a wise People must draw after it more favourable Consequences than that of a careless and foolish People; that the moral Fitness of Things and Establishment of the Course of Nature will imply good Success to those who behave properly, and Evil to those who behave otherwise, if not immediately, yet some time or other in the Course of their Existence; and that therefore (in the present State of Things) Communities will more certainly meet with their proportionable Events than Individuals, because Nations (as such) have no future Existence beyond the present State of Things to be rewarded or punished in: And that therefore, ordinarily, the righteous Individual must suffer in a wicked Society, and the wicked Individual flourish in a righteous one: Each Community receiving here, at present, their due Reward, and if there be a just Judge and Governor of the World, each Individual will find a future State of Retribution in which present Inequalities shall be adjusted.

Accordingly if we consult *History* we shall find that they, *that plough Iniquity, and sow Wickedness, reap the same.* We hear the great Economist, in the ordinary Course of his Providence, declaring in effect to every wicked Nation upon Earth, what he did to *Judah*, *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee.* But if we consult the sacred Records, we shall find particular and extraordinary Threatnings, and corresponding Execution, in all the Instances before-mentioned.

Job ix. 4.
5, 6.

—With respect to *Iniquity*; God is mighty in Strength: Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered? Which removeth the Mountains, and they know not, and overturneth them in his Anger: which shaketh the Earth out of her Place, and the Pillars thereof tremble. Because the Inhabitants of the Earth have transgressed the Laws, changed the Ordinances, broken the everlasting Covenant. Therefore Fear, and the Pit, and the Snare are upon thee.

If. xxiv. 5.
17, 18, 19,
20.

—He who fleeth from the Noise of the Fear, shall fall into the Pit; and he that cometh up out of the Pit, shall be taken in the Snare: For the Windows from on high are open, and the Foundations of the Earth do shake. The Earth is utterly broken down, the Earth is clean dissolved, the Earth is moved exceedingly. The Earth shall reel to and fro like a Drunkard, and shall be removed like a Cottage, and the Transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it, and it shall fall and not rise again. The whole History of the People of God, and their final Destruction for rejecting our Saviour, the Messiah, are ample Attestations of this Truth.

If. xiii. 9.
11. 13.

—With regard to *Pride and Self-confidence*; Behold the Day of the Lord cometh, cruel with Wrath and fierce Anger, to lay the Land desolate; and he shall destroy the Sinners thereof out of it—I will punish the World for their Evil, and the Wicked for their Iniquity; and I will cause the Arrogancy of the Proud to cease, I will lay low the Haughtiness of the Terrible—Therefore I will shake the Heavens, and the Earth shall remove out of her Place, in the Wrath of the Lord of Hosts, and in the Day of his fierce Anger.—He bringeth down them that dwell on high, the lofty City he layeth it low, he layeth it low, even to the Ground, he bringeth it even to the Dust.

Ch. xxvi.
5.

Ch. xxiii.
9.

—To stain the Pride of all Glory, and to bring into Contempt all the Honourable of the Earth—Hell hath enlarged

enlarged herself, and opened her Mouth without Meas- II. v. 14.
 sure: and their Glory, and their Multitude, and their
 Pomp, and be that rejoiceth shall descend into it.
 And by the Prophet Ezekiel God enforces his
 Threatnings against Egypt, by pointing to the simi-
 lar Destruction of Assyria. Son of Man, speak unto Ch. xxxi.
 Pharaoh, and unto his Multitude, whom art thou like 2-14.
 in thy Greatness? Behold the Assyrian was a Cedar
 in Lebanon, with fair Branches—the Waters made
 him great, the Deep set him up on high, with her Rivers
 running round about his Plants—therefore his height
 was exalted above all the Trees of the Field, and his
 Boughs were multiplied, and his Branches became long
 because of the Multitude of Waters, when he shot
 forth—under his Shadow dwelt all great Nations.
 Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast
 lifted up thyself in height, and his Heart is lifted up
 in his height—I have driven him out for his Wicked-
 ness. To the End, that none of all the Trees by the
 Waters exalt themselves for their height, neither
 shoot up their Tops among the thick Boughs: For
 they are all delivered unto Death, to the nether Parts
 of the Earth in the midst of the Children of Men,
 with them that go down to the Pit.

—With regard to Avarice and the greedy Pursuit of
 Gain; the divine Threatnings against it were dread-
 fully exemplified in the Destruction of Babylon
 and of Tyre. O thou that dwellest upon many Wa- Jer. li. 13.
 ters, abundant in Treasures, thine End is come, and 29. 8.
 the Measure of thy Covetousness. The Land shall
 tremble and sorrow, for every Purpose of the Lord
 shall be performed against Babylon, to make the Land
 of Babylon a Desolation without an Inhabitant. Ba-
 bylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed. To Tyre, thus
 said the Lord by the Prophet Ezekiel, By thy great Ch. xxviii.
 Wisdom, and by thy Traffick, thou hast increased thy 5. 16. 18.
 Riches, and thine Heart is lifted up because of thy
 Riches.

Riches. By the Multitude of thy Merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with Violence, and thou hast sinned: Therefore will I cast thee as profane out of the Mountain of God. Thou hast defiled thy Sanctuaries by the Multitude of thine Iniquities, by the Iniquity of thy Traffic. Therefore I will make thee like the Top of a Rock; thou shalt be a Place to spread Nets upon, thou shalt be built no more: For I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God.

Ezek.
xxvi. 14.

—With regard to Dissoluteness, Intemperance, Uncleanliness, and a general Corruption of Manners; there are most awakening Examples upon Record, in the Fate of the old World, and the Perdition of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gen. vi.
1. 5. 13.

In the old World, when Men began to multiply on the Face of the Earth, and God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great in the Earth, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil continually. God said unto Noah, the End of all Flesh is come before me: For the Earth is filled with Violence through them: And behold, I will destroy them with the Earth. And all the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven were opened. And every living Substance was destroyed from the Earth, and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the Ark.

Ch. vii.
11. 23.

Jude 7.

So again Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them, in like manner giving themselves to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh, are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire; a Fire so lasting, that the Marks and Signatures of it abide to this Day, and shall continue a perpetual Monument of the Wrath of God, an Example unto them that after should live ungodly; but chiefly them that walk after the Flesh in the Lust of Uncleanliness. The Account, which Moses gives,

2 Pet. ii.
6. 10.

in, that the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. xix. Brimstone and Fire from the Lord out of Heaven, 24. 25. And he overthrew these Cities, and all the Plain, and all the Inhabitants of the Cities, and that which grew upon the Ground. Of which *Le Clerc* gives this probable Interpretation; that the bituminous and inflammable Soil kindling with Lightning occasioned a violent Concussion of the Earth, which overthrew so large a Tract of Land. And that from the same Cause they had been frequently warned by several previous Shocks. Now it is no Objection, that these Effects are regularly produced by natural Causes; for the Governor of the World was also the Author of Nature, and for executing his Plan of Government, concerted from the Beginning, has doubtless furnished himself with Storehouses of Vengeance, in the Bowels of the Earth, in the Firmament; and all around us, ready at his Command; whose Operations he restrains, or lets loose at pleasure.

Some may say, granting all these historical Facts, what are these Threatnings, or these Judgments to us in particular? Does it follow that because Sodom and Gomorrah were buried by an Earthquake, therefore London and the Places in its neighbourhood must? I pray God it may follow as little in *Fact*, as in *Logick*!

But if we discover a Resemblance in Guilt in ourselves, may we not apprehend the Possibility of a Resemblance in Punishment? And if farther we have experienced similar Warnings, may we not justly dread the Probability of similar Vengeance? God has long held out his Threatnings to this sinful Nation: Besides the Calamities of a long and expensive War, which our own Avarice and Pursuit of unjust Gain by an illicit Trade, first opened a Door to bring in upon us; besides that heavy Judgment, so many Years continued, the Hand of
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the Lord upon our Cattle, which if not introduced at first (as has been reported) yet certainly has been spread and propagated by a most detestable Avarice and Iniquity; besides the Dread of Pestilence, with which we have been alarmed, and against which, I fear the Self-denial of the present English Wisdom, when a considerable Gain shall invite to import it, will be no Security; besides these, I say, our two late dreadful Shocks, the latter still more awakening than the former, are unhappy Proofs of

Pl. xviii. 7. *God's Anger and Indignation against us. The Earth trembled and quaked, the very Foundations also of the Hills shook, and were removed because he was wroth. Shall we say they are past, and we are safe: We have nothing more to fear? So was it suggested in the old World: In the Days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, Mat. xxiv. 38. Luke xvii. 27. marrying and giving in Marriage. And the Flood came, and destroyed them all. They regarded not the Admonition of the Prophet, and perished instantly in the midst of their Carelessness and Security. This was the lulling Song in Sodom and Gomorrah; they resolved their previous Warnings into natural Effects, and laughing at the Admonition, as St. Luke describes them, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built; but the same Day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained Fire and Brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all. In the like fatal Security, and profane Carelessness were the Cities of Port-Royal and Lima destroyed. And I know not what sufficient Authority we have to think, that Nation rising against Nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, and Famine, and Pestilences, and Earthquakes in divers Places, all which we have experienced, or been threatned with, shall be the Ending of Sorrows to us, which Mat. xxiv. are described but as the Beginning of Sorrows to 7. 8. other*

other People. It is an unhappy Observation to make, that the State and Disposition of the *Helvians*, which foretold the final Overthrow of *Lima*, *Port-Royal*, and the Cities in *Sicily*, were very like that in which we have lately seen them; and which the *Platmist* paints with as much Exactness as Liveliness: *The Clouds poured out Water, the Air* Pl. lxxvii. *thundered, and thine Arrows went abroad; those* 17, 18. *darting Meteors which have been so remarkable: The Voice of thy Thunder was heard round about, the Lightning's stone upon the Ground, the Earth was moved and shook withal.*

Yet let it not be understood as if I pretended a Commission to foretell, or Skill sufficient to prognosticate, that such will be our Fate. No! It is my Duty, which I now most seriously perform, to offer Intercessions for you to the Throne of Grace. O Lord, according to all thy Righteousness; I beseech thee, let thy Anger and thy Fury be turned away from us. Thou hast been displeased at us; O turn thee unto us again! Thou hast made the Earth to tremble; thou hast broken it, O heal the Breaches thereof for it longeth! But towards escaping final Destruction some Duties lie upon us to discharge. Not absurdly flying from the Presence of an omnipresent God; who, as it were, to convince such of their Folly, has been pleased to lay his Hand on several Parts of the Kingdom. A Terror, which however contrary to Reason, is natural to Guilt. Our conscious Ancestor, when he heard the Voice of God, was afraid, and hid himself from the Presence Gen. iii. 2. of the Lord: And his guilty Sons will go into the II. ii. 19. Holes of the Rocks, and into the Caves of the Earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the Glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the Earth. However, let not such as are convicted of so irrational a Terror, be ashamed hereafter to profess a Fear Pl. cxi. 10. of

of God; which if it be the Conclusion of their Folly, will happily prove the Beginning of Wisdom. Let this Fear of God awaken us all to consider how much we have added to the Sum of National Wickedness, and to break off our Sins by Repentance. For we are taught by the Text,

THIRDLY, that the Execution, when God has threatened final Destruction, is respite for a Time in Mercy, and may be totally averted by our Reformation. *If that Nation against which I pronounced, turn from their Evil, I will repent of the Evil which I thought to do unto them.* Here I must be very short, but will endeavour to be as practical as I can.

Let me therefore prevail with you strictly to reserve the Lord's Day for the Offices of Religion, and to be constant in your Attendance on publick Worship: I wish it might be in the National Form, that we may appear with one Heart and one Voice before the divine Majesty, "acknowledging and
"bemoaning our manifold Sins and Wickedness,
"which have most justly provoked his Wrath and
"Indignation against us, imploring Mercy and
"Forgiveness for our Redeemer's sake, and the
"Grace of the Holy Spirit that we may ever here-
"after serve and please him in Newness of Life."

Let every Morning Sun awaken your Gratitude to God, your Trust and Confidence in him; thank him for the Protection of the preceding Night, and implore his Blessings on your honest Labours the following Day: Let every Setting-Sun call to view the Conduct of the past Day, and inspire you with Resolutions to correct what you find amiss. Habituate your Children, Servants, and Dependants to *Family-Devotion*, and daily introduce them to the Presence, and to an Acquaintance with God.

Never

Never indulge the Habit of any known Sin, and therefore be particularly upon your Guard against the Sins of your Profession, Constitution, and of those with whom you most frequently converse. Express your Disapprobation of those who revile your Creator and Redeemer; nor politely sacrifice Them (to whom you owe every Blessing you enjoy or hope for) to the Mirth of Fools. They seek to heal their own uneasy Consciences and strengthen themselves by your Countenance and Applause: Contempt, could it be made more general, would be a Means to cure them. In the Pursuit of Temporal Interest, forget not your Eternal, nor indiscreetly forfeit the latter for any precarious Profit, Honour, or Pleasure here. Thus shall you save your own Souls, and be happy Instruments, by your Example and Influence, in saving the Souls of many others. There are some who would be virtuous and religious if they could be countenanced in it. Take Courage, and set the Example; you will have more to join you than you are aware of; or at least it will be a very reputable Singularity.

But says the Sinner, unwilling to set about the disagreeable Work of Amendment, and desirous to shift it off to others, let our Superiors begin, and lead the Way to a *National* Reformation. What can the Righteousness of *one Person* avail? I answer,

1. It is through the Gates of Death that we must pass to a joyful Resurrection; and if *One Person* secures the latter to himself, when, or by what Means he passes through the former, is comparatively of very little Moment. If the yawning Earth opens a Passage to Heaven, we shall make a happy Improvement of God's Judgment: The

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World

World may crumble and perish round us, but we are safe.

2. Even temporal Deliverance in general Ruins have been providentially wrought for particular Persons; thus *Noah* and his Family were saved when the World perished: Righteous *Lot* escaped out of sinking *Sodom*; and all the *Christians*, as commanded, fled to the Mountains just before *Jerusalem* was destroyed.

3. We know that Ten Righteous would have saved *Sodom*. We cannot indeed tell the exact Number that will atone for this Nation, and avert its Ruin: We may presume we have sufficient for that Number, or we had perished before. These by the Law of Nature are gradually wearing away; perhaps at present there wants but your Resolutions, the Resolutions of *One Person*, to keep the Number compleat, and save your Country. Such may be the happy Effects of any One Individual's Reformation: The more are prevailed upon, the more certain this salutary Effect will be.

Still the reluctant Sinner demurs, and cries, the sudden Vengeance may ingulph us in a Moment, and surprize us in the midst of our Resolutions, before we have an Opportunity of manifesting their Sincerity. This is an Argument why we should instantly begin those holy Resolutions. And then we trust, that God will either spare us for the producing a holy Life, or that the Spirit which inspired those Resolutions, and knows their Sincerity, will accept us, and seal us to the Day of Redemption. We know, that shortly the Earth will open, and swallow us all; if not by Earthquakes, yet by single Graves: That sooner or later the Day of the Lord will come, in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt

Eph. iv.
30.

2 Pet. iii.
10, 11, 13,
14.

melt with fervent Heat, and the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness? Nevertheless we, according to his Promise, look for new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. Wherefore, Beloved, seeing that ye look for such Things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and blameless.

F I N I S.



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